

3. Historical origins of the french school of economic warfare

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Abstract:

The French school of economic warfare analysis may be considered one of the most prominent on the European continent today, with numerous private and public institutes – including the School of Economic Warfare in Paris – dedicated to spreading awareness of its importance in expanding and improving the practical activities of French businesses. This article proposes a historical analysis of this tradition, focusing on the last three decades of the 20th Century a division into three periods that goes beyond mere chronological convenience in order to illustrate the fundamental turning points and achievements in a not always linear evolution. One particular aim of the analysis is to emphasise the crucial role played by the French business intelligence apparatus in affirming the nation's economic autonomy, previously in the bipolar world of the Cold War and presently in the context of globalisation. In addition to the internal dynamics of the evolution of this apparatus, emphasis is placed on the story's leading characters, the scholars and statesmen, who provided it with propulsion through their works by interpreting the nation's potential in the economic field as a direct descendant of the ideals that have lain at the heart of the French Republic since 1789.

Keywords:

Economic warfare; business intelligence; the State; companies; information